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# The Return of Christ

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## INTRODUCTION

WHILST DRIVING TO work the other day I was surprised to hear on the radio the presenter laughingly running through a news 'trivia' item which ran along the following lines: 'A man has placed a £60 bet with a local bookmaker at 3000:1 that Jesus Christ will return to the earth this year. The bookmakers must love people like that,' the presenter sneered.

The fact is that the Bible has a consistent and clear message on the very subject of the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. A subject which it can be stated has been given little exposure by modern Theologians to their congregations during these closing decades of the 20th century.

Christianity at large has lost sight of the fact that fundamental teaching of the Bible demonstrates quite clearly that the world has yet to hear the last of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

It is the mission of this short article to introduce the reader to a Bible teaching which has sadly been generally neglected by religious communities and scorned by the populace of the world at large. A teaching which upon its fulfilment will send the established societies of the world reeling into disorder and conflagration such as there has never been on this planet. A teaching which the Bible student, the follower of the commandments of the Bible, looks longingly forward to as a day of restitution from the world's ailments of death, disease, famine, pollution and every kind of catastrophe imaginable.

In order to understand the purpose of God's plan in sending His now perfected and immortal Son, Jesus Christ, back to the earth, we have first to spend some time looking at the basic Bible teaching on God's plan and purpose with the earth.

## SALVATION IS OF THE JEWS

The Bible is a book about the Jews and how they came into being as a race. It speaks of how God promised the Jews great blessings if they obeyed Him.

Abraham was the first Jew and God spoke to him in this manner.

'...I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, I will curse him who curses you; and in you all families of the earth shall be blessed.'<sup>1</sup>

In order to make sense of just how all families of the earth can be blessed through the Jews, we have to understand that the Bible presents us with an opportunity to become related to the Jews through baptism into the saving name of Jesus Christ.

'For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ . . . And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.'<sup>2</sup>

The Bible also speaks of how God required the Jews to obey His word, and how as the prophets had predicted that they would, they slew Jesus Christ their Messiah, because they did not recognise him. God extended His promises to the Gentile through association with Jesus Christ.

God promised Jesus Christ who was a Jew, if he overcame the sinful traits of human nature which cause mankind generally to be disobedient to God's will, He would not permit him to suffer the permanence of death but would raise him up to everlasting life. Thus, immortality would be vested on him as a reward for obedience to God's will. The Psalmist wrote these words.

'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For you will not leave my soul in sheol, [the grave] nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo [margin] corruption.'<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore Christ's resurrection to immortality was to set a precedent for all those who obey the commands of God as set out in the Bible. The Bible clearly shows that the righteous servant of God will, at the second coming of Jesus Christ to the earth, be raised from the dead and, along with those faithful to the commands still alive, be judged and if found worthy be given the gift of immortality.

'But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep . . . For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterwards those who are Christ's at his coming.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Genesis 12.2,3 (NKJV)    <sup>2</sup>Galatians 3.26-29 (NKJV)    <sup>3</sup>Psalms 16.9,10 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup>I Corinthians 15.20-23 (NKJV)

### THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF CHRIST'S RETURN

The disciples in the Acts of the Apostles were spoken to by an angel immediately after the ascension of the resurrected Christ to heaven, and they had this to say,

'... two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven".'<sup>5</sup>

Speaking in the book of the Revelation to the apostle John in the Isle of Patmos, Jesus himself said this,

'And behold I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every one according to his work.'<sup>6</sup>

In the gospel according to Matthew we find interesting words about the activity that Jesus will be involved in upon his return.

'When the Son of Man comes in all his glory, and all the Holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the one from the other . . . Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . ."'<sup>7</sup>

Jesus Christ is then to return to the earth to reward the obedient and to punish the disobedient to God's will. Out of the initial judgemental period of Christ's return will come the subjugation of the nations and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

The true disciples of Christ are taught by him to pray thus '... thy KINGDOM COME thy will be done **ONE EARTH** even as it is done in heaven . . .' There being no message in the Bible that man at death transcends a physical spiritual boundary and wings his way heavenward TO the kingdom. In fact the Bible clearly tells us that '*no man has ascended into the heavens.*' Characteristically the Bible has several hidden messages which support the obvious texts on this subject. The Old Testament as well as the New Testament provide clear signals on the timing and nature of the second coming of Jesus Christ to the Earth.

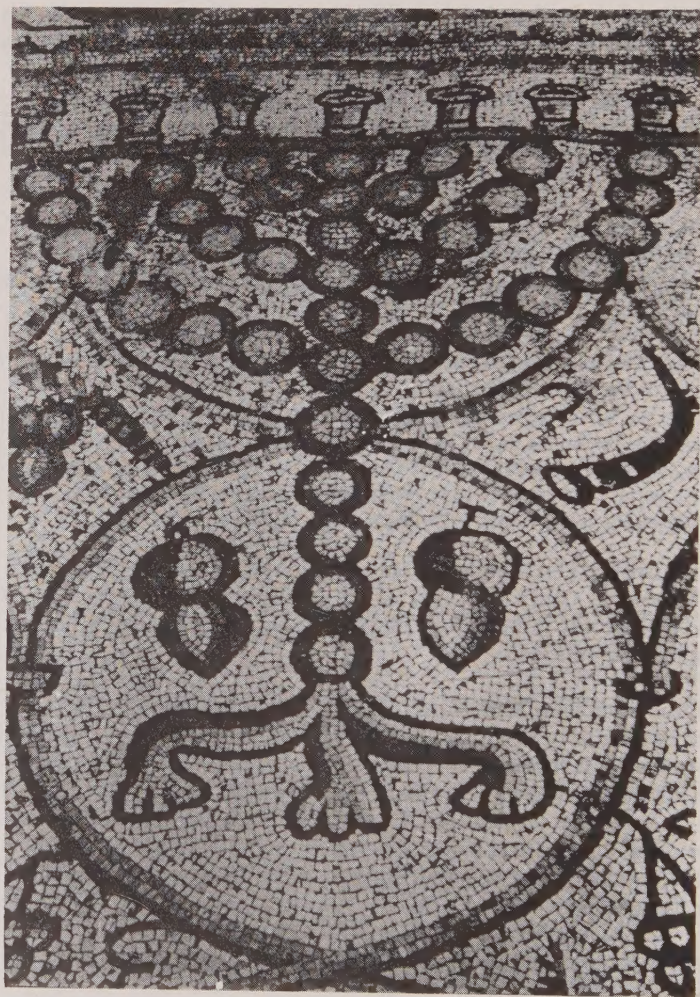
The man who placed his bet at 3000:1 is obviously seeking the reward of his conviction.

Ironically, all the evidence points to the return of Jesus Christ as a certainty and not speculation.

J. H. Meadows  
West Kingsdown

<sup>5</sup>Acts 1.10,11 (NKJV) <sup>6</sup>Revelation 22.12 (NKJV) <sup>7</sup>Matthew 25.31-34 (NKJV)





COVER PICTURE

The mosaic floor illustrated on our cover was discovered in the ruins of an ancient synagogue in Southern Israel during the 1950's.

# Signs of Jesus' Early Return

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DURING HIS THREE and a half year ministry, Jesus had many encounters with representatives of Jewish sects who questioned his authority. Sometimes they approached him singly, sometimes collectively, but their objective was the same: they wanted to trip him up or belittle him. One day, a combined group of Pharisees and Sadducees asked him for a sign, a token or proof of his identity.<sup>1</sup>

There was a precedent for this because in the Old Testament, God's messengers had provided signs to prove their authenticity. The enquiry, however, was not genuine. Jesus was well aware of this fact and turned the tables on them. He contrasted their supposedly honest request with the short-lived interest associated with weather forecasting. People then, as now, liked to think they could foretell the weather. Cloud formations, wind direction, differences in temperature and so on were signs of coming storms. A prudent man would be warned in advance and take the necessary steps to safeguard his property. His warning to them then was to watch out for the signs of disastrous violent political storms which would affect them nationally very soon. He called these the 'signs of the times'.

His warning appears to have gone unheeded by those who first raised the question, but the disciples seem to have got the point and later on, they asked him privately for the sign of his coming and the end of the world.<sup>2</sup>

This did not refer to the natural world in which they lived, but to the dispensation of things, the pattern or arrangement of their lives. At that time, they were a subject people, ruled over by Rome, but having a national identity and a measure of independence in religious and secular matters. This state of affairs ended in AD 70 when Jerusalem was besieged and destroyed by Rome and the Jewish

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 16.1-3    <sup>2</sup>Matthew 24.3



remnant dispersed. Jesus gave his disciples a list of the signs to look for, in order to avoid danger and death, but he stressed that he was not coming back then.

Some people would try to persuade them otherwise, some might even masquerade as the Messiah, but they must not be deceived by these imposters. Many years would have to pass before his return and, during this time, Jerusalem would continue downtrodden and disregarded. It was only when the Jewish nation began to revive that those watching for the Second Coming could begin to hope. So the resurgence of Israel was to be a sign of his coming and there is no doubt about its reality today. Jesus likened it to the budding of a fig tree, the national emblem.<sup>3</sup>

In the days of the Kingdom of Judah, the prophet Isaiah was told to invite the king to ask for a sign. He was told it could be either a sign from the height, or from the depth, but the king refused to ask.<sup>4</sup>

If we compare this with the idea of weather forecasting, it can be regarded as signs in the sky, such as clouds or lightning and signs in the earth, such as the behaviour of birds or animals. So we can look for two kinds of sign: changes in the power or government and changes in the lives of the general population.<sup>5</sup>

### THE WITNESS OF HISTORY

History, of course, tells us that there have been many changes in government and such changes are usually brought about by war, but modern history also tells us that the rate of change is much faster now and that it is more likely to come from the lower orders of society revolting against the ruling classes, resulting in political changes from within. In Bible symbology, seas and rivers are representative of the masses of people; they are said to roar.<sup>6</sup> Recent examples can be given — civil strife in the USSR, South Africa and Yugoslavia, to name but a few. Because people are better informed, better organised and better able to communicate, protests and revolts against authority must increase. Furthermore, as weaponry and armaments become more and more sophisticated, the threat of attack becomes more sinister. Will the expected storm increase to a hurricane?

Just as people look anxiously over their shoulders at the advancing clouds, so many thinking people look at the political horizon. Jesus said it would be so.<sup>7</sup>

However, it is not only political unrest which gives people cause for fear. There are many social and economic problems and these seem to get worse. The so-called 'developed' countries experience recession, unemployment and inflation. That same development often brings pollution and a proliferation of new motorways, power stations and industrial buildings. On the other hand, the less developed countries seem to fall further and further behind and millions of people face

<sup>3</sup>Luke 21.29-31   <sup>4</sup>Isaiah 7.11,12   <sup>5</sup>Luke 21.24   <sup>6</sup>Luke 21.25,26   <sup>7</sup>Luke 21.10,11



starvation. Countries which have reached a high technical standard of food production find it necessary to reduce their acreages because of surpluses. Surely this fits Jesus' description of 'Distress of nations with perplexity'? In Europe, North America and Australia, agricultural procedures are performed by machinery and there is hardly any need for human labour. In many other places, however, such as Africa, India, South America and so on, we find that the work is physically performed by '*manpower and womanpower*'. Their often primitive and limited efforts can never produce adequate supplies of food and, if we also set against them the effects of drought and war, the result is widespread famine and human misery and death.<sup>8</sup>

Jesus had already given wars as a sign of his coming and, in many cases, these are strongly connected with famine.

Unnaturally, severe droughts on the one hand and unprecedented floods on the other, are now thought by many authorities to be connected with de-forestation and environmental pollution. Why are these issues now becoming so important?

For generations, man has been plundering and wasting the earth's resources, believing them to be inexhaustible. Now some are sounding a note of caution, warning about the dangers ahead.

Is there anything in the Bible which has a bearing on this? Yes, and it is significantly stated to be a symptom of the '*Last Days*', that is the last days of man's rule on the earth. The Apostle James warned of the greed and lust which would inflame mankind.<sup>9</sup>

The Apostle Paul too, writing to Timothy, condemned the selfishness and covetousness of those same '*last days*'.<sup>10</sup>

Closely connected with famine is pestilence. Hungry refugees, crowded by the thousand into camps with inadequate facilities, fall victim to such scourges as cholera and dysentery. Serious though this may be, it does not pose such a threat as the prospect of widespread outbreaks of AIDS. Until recent years, AIDS was virtually unknown in Europe, being confined to certain areas in Africa. However, faster and more widespread travel, coupled with a great increase in promiscuity and immorality, has made this scourge a menace to millions.

One unexpected, indeed surprising, sign given by Jesus was the occurrence of earthquakes. Well, there have always been earthquakes and, as an example, they are mentioned in the Old Testament. In those days, primitive people did not understand them and some invented all sorts of stories to explain them. In the book of Revelation, which is a book of sign, earthquakes are used to denote revolutions

<sup>8</sup>Mark 13.19,20    <sup>9</sup>James 5.1-5    <sup>10</sup>II Timothy 3.1,2

and political shake-ups, but in our Lord's Mount Olivet prophecy, the coming earthquakes are listed with *real* wars, *real* famines and *real* pestilences, so we must assume they are *real* earthquakes, not symbolic ones. It is a well-known fact that, in recent years, the incidence of earthquakes has increased. Scientists tell us of the existence of 'faults' in the earth's crust and so can anticipate the occurrence of earthquakes. It must be apparent to any thinking person, however, that Jesus, nearly 2000 years ago, could foresee the future tremors and could predict the other signs already mentioned. What was the basis of his prophecy? It was surely his unshakeable belief in the Divine Creation of the earth. We can barely grasp the awesome concept of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' Included in that Creation were the essential conditions which produce earthquakes today. In addition, there were mineral deposits which provided power and wealth by which empires were built. Included in these are the Middle East oil resources which have been responsible for so much trouble and continue to be so. Man cannot appreciate the complexity of the ways of God, both in the past and in the future.

### MANS MORTALITY

God is eternal, man is mortal, and the Divine question to Job, 'Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?'<sup>11</sup> can only receive the reply provided by the Apostle Paul: 'O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God'.<sup>12</sup> One point that should be stressed about our Lord's prophecy regarding the signs of his coming is that the majority of them consist of a worsening or increase in problems already familiar to mankind. There have always been wars, revolutions, pestilences and famines, but they are increasing not decreasing, despite the increase in human knowledge and the desire for improvement.

The Middle East used to be known as the Cradle of Civilisation because early cultures and empires were established there. It was therefore a place of great strategic importance and so it also became a place of conflict. It was also an area where different religions competed with each other, another cause for wars. However, in the early years of this century, travellers who ventured into its forbidding territory found it largely deserted, thinly populated by poor ignorant nomadic people.

The First and Second World Wars brought a great change and subsequently the production of oil by Arab states and the reclamation of much former desert by Israel meant that many formerly undesirable areas became very important. Consequently, we have seen much political unrest, several wars or threatened wars and many attempts at solving the problem by peace talks and diplomacy. These attempts are doomed to failure because the Bible tells us that, in the latter or last days, there will

<sup>11</sup>Job 38.4    <sup>12</sup>Romans 11.33-36



be a conflict of unprecedented ferocity, centred on the mountains of Israel with a remarkable result.<sup>13</sup>

That conflict will be won by Jesus and his followers.

Obviously, Jesus has to come back before this great battle and it therefore follows that the political unrest in the Middle East is just the curtain-raiser to the main event.

What is most puzzling, indeed inexplicable, is the fact that so few people today seem to be concerned about the future. Certainly, one hears comments about the state of the world generally and the state of this country in particular. Older people deplore the lowering standards of behaviour and remember when things were different. Those responsible for law and order try to maintain some semblance of stability. Family life is in danger, the majority of people have thrown away the old moral rule book which their parents acknowledged.

Paul told Timothy this would be so in the last days, but he added one further explicit sign.<sup>14</sup> He said that, in the midst of a general lack of religion, there would be some who would profess a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. Isn't that just what many bishops and clergy are doing today when they deny the Creation, the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection? All these doctrines underline the power of God, so to deny them will also deny His supreme power.

God's supreme power has created this world and maintained it ever since. His great purpose and plan has continued from the beginning of Creation; but those who do not admit His existence cannot perceive the signs of the Second Coming of His Son. To them, all these developments mean nothing. They remain wrapped up in their own selfish interests and ask nothing more of life than a licence to indulge in pleasure and enjoyment, often in dubious circumstances or downright vice. This behaviour mimics the practices of those who lived before the Flood, an era compared to the days immediately prior to the Second Coming. Jesus warned us about it in that same Mount Olivet prophecy already referred to.<sup>15</sup>

The human population was said to be 'eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.' They were not condemned for that — it was, and is, normal behaviour. No, it was their moral outlook and attitude that was displeasing to God. The earth was filled with violence and corruption and so judgement came upon it.<sup>16</sup>

However, God was longsuffering and did not destroy those corrupt people immediately. While Noah was building the ark, he preached to his neighbours and warned them, but in vain. Like Christ's contemporaries mentioned at the

<sup>13</sup>Ezekiel 38.8    <sup>14</sup>II Timothy 3.5    <sup>15</sup>Matthew 24.37-39    <sup>16</sup>Genesis 6.5-13

beginning of this article, they ignored the coming storm, preferring to live in the present.

The warning becomes more and more urgent as the time of Christ's coming draws nearer. A Bible phrase puts it very succinctly: 'Save yourselves from this untoward (corrupt) generation.'

Clarence J. Martin-Harris  
Dorchester



# The Reality of Christ's Kingdom

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EVERYONE IS FAMILIAR with the Lord's Prayer; we must all have learnt it as children and can all recite it by heart. But do we appreciate the full significance of its phrases? In particular, how do we understand the familiar phrases about the Kingdom of God? 'Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.' What is the reality behind that simple invocation? That is the question we hope to answer in this article.

## A HEAVENLY KINGDOM ON EARTH

'Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven.'

Those words convey an incredible vision of this earth, as far removed from present realities as it is possible to get. They speak of a planet on whose surface God's will is done as perfectly as it is now done in heaven. At no time during the nineteen hundred-odd years that have elapsed since Jesus first uttered that prayer can that situation be said to have existed. Nor does it exist today. As we contemplate the violence, injustice, vice and crime that surround us, we seem to be further away than ever from that blessed vision of this earth.

Yet it remains a vision that Jesus has taught his disciples to pray for. And Jesus is not teaching us to pray for '*pie in the sky*': this is not a vision of heaven. Rather is it a vision of a heavenly situation here on earth; of a Kingdom that will do what no other Kingdom on earth has ever done before.

Writers, philosophers, politicians and statesmen have dreamed of systems of perfect world government that would bathe the globe in peace and plenty since time immemorial. But their dreams have been fundamentally flawed, based, as they invariably have been, on the perfectibility of man: the notion that men and women can themselves reverse the self-destructive tendencies of human nature that lie at the root of so many of the problems that afflict this planet. The creeds, systems and philosophies that have dreamed of perfection on earth have, therefore, been

doomed to remain nothing more than dreams. When all attempts have been made to put them into practice, the result has always been disaster and disillusionment.

### THE HUMAN ELEMENT

In contrast, the Bible has no illusions about the nature of man. Take, for example, the problem of human aggression, possibly the cause of the greatest suffering on the earth.

The Bible asks,

‘What causes fights and quarrels among you?’

The answer it gives lies within ourselves:

‘Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight.’<sup>1</sup>

That is the diagnosis. Can man himself effect a cure? The Bible is not hopeful here. Even a man of the calibre of the Apostle Paul had to admit that:-

‘... the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.’

No matter how good his intentions, human sinfulness was ever present:-

‘I find then a law, that, when I do good, evil is present with me.’<sup>2</sup>

If this depressing picture of human frailty was true for as worthy a man as the Apostle Paul, it bodes ill for the rest of us. Certainly it strips away any illusions that we humans may have about transforming our world with no help other than from ourselves.

However, the reality of the Kingdom of God does not depend on frail man for its achievement. In that, it differs from all the other visions of perfection here on earth that have inspired and also disillusioned so many. For the Kingdom of God is divine in origin as well as character. As the Lord’s Prayer puts it, God’s will is to be done on earth, not as a vain hope, but as a reality and the basis of this reality will be that it is happening as it now takes place in heaven.

### GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

The prophet describes this unprecedented state of affairs in a vivid figure:-

‘For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.’<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the subservience to God’s will in the Kingdom will be universal and complete. Only then will those problems which now appear so intractable begin to be solved to the great benefit of humankind.

<sup>1</sup>James 4.1,2 (NIV)    <sup>2</sup>Romans 7.19-21    <sup>3</sup>Habakkuk 2.14, Numbers 14.21



As the host of angels sang at the birth of Jesus Christ:-

'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'<sup>4</sup>

The most fundamental problem of all — human aggression and violence — will be solved only when God's glory is known and revered throughout the world and what is true for one problem must be true for all the others.

This vision of the future implies such a revolution in human affairs that it seems almost too incredible to contemplate. What guarantee do we have that God will directly intervene in human affairs to establish his Kingdom?<sup>5</sup>

The necessary assurance is given to us in the words of Paul:-

'... he [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained (ie the Lord Jesus Christ); whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him (Jesus) from the dead.'<sup>6</sup>

Jesus will have a pivotal role in the Kingdom of God as King in the name of God. It is also a demonstrable fact of history that he was raised from the dead, itself an incredible occurrence, and so, quite naturally, the fact of the Resurrection becomes a guarantee of the 'reality' of the Kingdom of God as promised in the pages of the Bible.

### JESUS WILL REIGN

The fact that it is styled 'The Kingdom of God' suggests that it will be a literal Kingdom with a King, a capital city and all the appurtenances of government, its divine nature notwithstanding. At its head, therefore, will be a King who will be none other than the one who's resurrection guarantees the future of the Kingdom.

For we are told that, when the Kingdom is established:-

'... the kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.'<sup>7</sup>

Jesus will reign as King over God's Kingdom and, as we would expect, his rule will be characterised by wisdom and justice. As we are told:-

'... A King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment . . . and the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.'<sup>8</sup>

Benign Kingship as never before seen in the history of man will bear its fruit.

'He shall judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with judgment . . . He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.'<sup>9</sup>

The extent of this beneficent rulership will be worldwide, quite literally so:-

<sup>4</sup>Luke 2.14 <sup>5</sup>Daniel 2.44 <sup>6</sup>Acts 17.31 <sup>7</sup>Revelation 11.15 <sup>8</sup>Isaiah 32.1,17 <sup>9</sup>Psa 72.2-4

'He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth . . . Yea, all Kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him . . . and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.'<sup>9</sup>

### JERUSALEM THE CAPITAL

Government, especially perfect worldwide government, has to have a centre. In the Kingdom of God, Jerusalem will perform this function as its capital city. Thus, Jesus told his disciples to:-

' . . . Swear not . . . by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great king.'<sup>10</sup>

As his seat, Jerusalem will be the place from which the government of the Kingdom of God will emanate:-

' . . . For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem . . . the Kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.'<sup>11</sup>

Let us look in detail at the benefits of this perfect world government. As we have seen, the most prominent blessing of the Kingdom will be peace, a peace that will permeate the whole of human society.

There will no longer be any of the preparations for war that now consume so many of the world's resources for:-

' . . . and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'<sup>12</sup>

'In his [the great King's] days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.'<sup>13</sup>

One reason for this tranquillity will be that, at last:-

'But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.'<sup>14</sup>

This tranquillity will extend even to the world of nature, for we read in Isaiah:-

'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock.'<sup>15</sup>

### A FERTILE EARTH

Another benefit of benign world government will be that famine and starvation will be things of the past. The fertility of our planet will be transformed when, as Isaiah also wrote:-

' . . . and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose . . . for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.'<sup>16</sup>

<sup>9</sup>Psalm 72.8,11,17 <sup>10</sup>Matthew 5.34,35 <sup>11</sup>Micah 4.2,8 <sup>12</sup>Isaiah 2.4 <sup>13</sup>Psalm 72.7 <sup>14</sup>Psalm 37.11  
<sup>15</sup>Isaiah 65.25 <sup>16</sup>Isaiah 35.1,6

So fertile will be the earth that:-

'There shall be an handful of corn . . . upon the top of the mountains;'<sup>17</sup>

and

' . . . the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed;'<sup>18</sup>

Starvation and malnutrition, from which a large proportion of the world's population now suffers, will be banished from the Kingdom of God.

### PERFECT JUSTICE

The world today is full of injustice and crime. But when a wholly righteous King is ruling the earth, the Psalmist records:-

'He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.'<sup>19</sup>

The reason for this perfect equity will be that the judge will not be using imperfect human methods, for:-

'He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.'<sup>20</sup>

No human motivation will be allowed to warp divine justice.

Perfect justice will extend even to the places where people live and work. These will no longer be areas where men and women are exploited.

' . . . they shall build houses, and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit, they shall not plant, and another eat.'<sup>21</sup>

At last, the dream of every working man and woman will be fulfilled:-

'They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.'<sup>22</sup>

### HEALTH AND LONGEVITY

This perfection will extend to the health of those who live in the Kingdom of God:-

'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.'<sup>23</sup>

In these perfect conditions life will be extended:-

'Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed.'<sup>24</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Psalm 72.16 <sup>18</sup>Amos 9.13 <sup>19</sup>Psalm 72.4 <sup>20</sup>Isaiah 11.3,4 (NIV) <sup>21</sup>Isaiah 65.21,22  
<sup>22</sup>Micah 4.4 <sup>23</sup>Isaiah 35.5,6 <sup>24</sup>Isaiah 65.20 (NIV)



Even the problem of multiplicity of languages, which does so much now to promote disharmony and discord will then be solved. One language only will be the rule universally applied, for this prophet informs us:-

'Yea, at that time will I change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.'<sup>25</sup>

That, then, is the wonderful 'reality' of the coming Kingdom, soon to be established on this earth, for which Jesus taught his followers to pray. It is not an impractical dream and it has God's guarantee, the Resurrection of Christ.

Let us then heed the urging of Jesus to put away our present mundane cares, for he said:-

'... seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness.'<sup>26</sup>

May we all be able to share in the blessings of that coming age.

Howard Cooke  
Sanderstead

<sup>25</sup>Zephaniah 3.9 (RSV) <sup>26</sup>Matthew 6.33